

Folklorists can become more visible and less reactive if our national, state-level, and university-based folklorists spend more time drawing us together through regional projects that are based on solid research and planning. This needs to be done in alliance with those who do similar work, but don't call it folklore. At the same time, all of us need to continue to make use of both technology and non-technology based opportunities to improve our ability to function in a world that often denies the existence of folklore, at the same time that it is being buffeted by its belief systems, attitudes, and traditions.

Next Steps

Burt Feintuch
University of New Hampshire

Recognizing that visions of the future are always contingent and nearly always wrong, I offer one that is utopian. Here is what I would like to see the future hold.

First, the trivial: We need a new name, replacing, "public folklore" with some formulation that makes sense to newcomers and does a better job rallying people.

Second, the methodological: We need an articulation of dramatically more ambitious principles for the public folklore enterprise. This articulation should lead to the development of practices that move the world toward those principles. Although public folklore continues to make incremental strides, it seems that it—like much work in other realms—it is bound up in a variation of infinite regression, spinning out new possibilities from old models, worrying about old issues, lapsing inward, and making less difference in the world than it should. This, in my view, has to do with a reluctance or inability to engage large issues of economics, class, and other structures of power and influence. That, in turn, denies the radical potential of our work to influence human relations. And that needs to change.

Third, the consequential: A genuinely progressive public folklore should help end the destructive craziness that truncates social bonds, denies creativity, keeps people from acting in concert, and constantly gets in the way of accomplishing human society.